United Nations CAT/C/SR.1290

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Distr.: General
22 April 2015

Original: English

Committee against Torture
Fifty-fourth session

Summary record of the first part (public)* of the 1290th meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 20 April 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Tugushi (Vice-Chairperson)

Contents

Opening of the session

Adoption of the agenda

* The summary record of the second part (closed) of the meeting appears as document CAT/C/SR.1290/Add.1.

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages of the United Nations. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of the present document* to the English Translation Section, room E.6040, Palais des Nations, Geneva (trad_sec_eng@unog.ch).

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.15-08075 (E) 210415 220415

1508075

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

1. *In the absence of the Chairperson, Mr. Tugushi (Vice-Chairperson) took the Chair.*

Opening of the session

2. **Mr. Salama** (Representative of the Secretary-General) declared open the fifty-fourth session of the Committee against Torture and welcomed Committee members. Reflecting on achievements in the 30 years since the adoption of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, he noted two opposing trends: a clear expansion of the definition of torture through jurisprudence, which was a positive development, and a worrying increase in the justification of torture as part of the fight against terrorism. The situation of torture in the world and the challenges faced in eradicating it had been the subject of a high-level side event held at the twenty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council in March 2015 at which the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Ivan Šimonović, had given a keynote address entitled: "Universal ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention against Torture – How to get there". The ensuing discussion had been attended by a large panel of ministers from States parties subscribing to the Convention against Torture Initiative (CTI). The objectives of the Initiative were to identify challenges and barriers to ratification and implementation of the Convention; to address obstacles through inter-State cooperation, assistance and dialogue; to mobilize legal advice and technical assistance to Governments; and to build a global platform of States that shared its vision. Since the fifty-third session of the Committee, a further eight States had joined the CTI Group of Friends and Viet Nam had ratified the Convention. The Committee, as custodian of the Convention, had been closely associated with work under the Initiative. Promoting ratification of the Convention was a priority for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the United Nations Missions in Guinea-Bissau and South Sudan had recently been active in that regard.

3. In addition to the top-down movement of the Initiative and other torture-prevention related mechanisms, bottom-up activity from the perspective of victims was discernible in the increased attention paid to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. On the occasion of the special meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Fund, held on 16 April 2015, delegations of States parties had been moved by the grantees' description of their experiences as civil society practitioners of rehabilitation of torture victims.

4. The recent launch of the long-awaited online public database on treaty body case law was an important step towards providing more visibility and accessibility for the work of the Committee and other treaty bodies. A less welcome development was the budget crisis facing OHCHR; in the constrained financial environment, its activities in support of the Committee would focus principally on the work set out in General Assembly resolution 68/268.

5. He was pleased to report that, following meetings in Brussels in interaction with the European system for the promotion and protection of human rights and in Addis Ababa with the African system, the annual Meeting of Chairpersons of Human Rights Treaty Bodies to be held in Costa Rica in June 2015 was to discuss the elaboration of a joint policy on reprisals. The subject would also be examined at the Committee's current session.

6. He encouraged the Committee, as part of its discussions on working methods, to continue to consider harmonization of the approach to elaboration of general comments. Consideration should also be given to how to update States parties on implementation of the Addis Ababa guidelines on the independence and impartiality of treaty body members.

7. **Mr. Bruni** said that the special meeting of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture on 16 April 2015 had been the first event to

which members of programmes financed by the Fund had been invited. On the following day, a public meeting held with diplomatic missions in Geneva had been very well attended, demonstrating the interest of States parties in the subject. It had been enlightening to hear from medical experts who provided care to torture victims. As a participant at that meeting, he had drawn attention to the Committee's general comment No. 3 (2012) on implementation of article 14 by States parties, which could be used as a guideline for medical professionals operating in the field. He had referred to the last part of the general comment with respect to the necessity for States parties to report to the Committee on the provision of redress measures to victims of torture, underlining the need for practical steps to implement the Convention.

8. **Ms. Gaer**, referring to the treaty body strengthening process, recalled that General Assembly resolution 68/268 provided for a new category of activity on capacity-building. She requested an update on capacity-building activities, especially with regard to States parties that were shortly due for review under the Convention and those that had not reported to the Committee in a timely way. The secretariat might wish to consult members of the Committee on what action would be helpful in that regard.

9. **Mr. Salama** (Representative of the Secretary-General) said that the input of members of the Committee would be welcome during elaboration of capacity-building measures. For the first time, capacity-building was covered under the regular budget and was therefore guaranteed; dedicated staff at Headquarters and 10 staff members in the field would provide technical assistance to States to improve national ownership and sustainability and to train the trainers. Regular budget funding would cover one training event in each of the four regions, while added value would come from developing tools; an evaluation would be carried out of existing methodology on State party reporting and treaty body implementation within OHCHR. In response to General Assembly resolution 68/268, a study was being carried out on standing national mechanisms in 23 Member States on the twin issues of sustainability and national ownership.

Adoption of the agenda (CAT/C/54/1)

10. **Ms. Gaer** noted that, under rule 9 of the rules of procedure, the Committee had the right to revise the agenda. She requested that the issue of reprisals should be considered under agenda item 3 on organizational and other matters and that system-wide coordination within the United Nations, in particular with respect to capacity-building under General Assembly resolution 68/268, should be discussed under item 3 or as a separate item.

11. It was her understanding that one State party had not responded to the Committee's requests for additional reports; it might be appropriate to add that issue as a separate agenda item rather than considering it under item 5. The issues mentioned might also be considered as they arose in the course of the session.

12. **The Chairperson** said that the Committee might revert to the issues raised by Ms. Gaer during the discussion on working methods under agenda item 3. He had taken note of the requests made.

13. *The agenda was adopted.*

14. **The Chairperson** recalled that all dialogues with States parties would be webcast, in line with the practice of the Committee and as recommended in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the strengthening of the human rights treaty bodies.

The public part of the meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.